

THE ASYLUM

Quarterly Journal of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society

Volume IV, No. 4Winter, 1986

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From the Editor

Happy holidays to all numismaniacs! With this number, slimmed down in order to arrive before 1987, *The Asylum* is officially back on schedule. Many thanks to our members, whose writings made it possible, and a special expression of gratitude to Nils Peterson of Rayline Press, whose skill and dedication transforms a mess into a magazine four times a year.

This festive season would be incomplete without a New Year's Resolution; your editor's runs like this: we resolve to actually publish a *quarterly* journal in 1987! In pursuit of this noble goal, we hereby announce the following thoroughly arbitrary and utterly inflexible deadlines for submissions in 1987:

Spring issue	February 15
Summer issue	May 1
Autumn issue	August 1
Winter issue	November 1

As the following feature reveals, we have many fine articles lined up — but we always need more. To paraphrase the good book, “submit, and ye shall receive.”!

PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

Sometime in 1987

“Research: Necessity, Curiosity, and a Roll of the Dice” by Carling Gresham

“Some Particular Advice to Those About to Start a Collection of Coins” by Marvin Kay, M. D.

“An Introduction to the Fascinating World of Numismatic Literature” by George Frederick Kolbe

“Saga of Utah's Largest Man-Hunt” by Harry F. Campbell

A review by Chris Victor-McCawley of Grellman/Reiver's *Attribution Guide for United States Large Cents, 1840-1857*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

A census of the following 19th century numismatic classics is being conducted, the results will be published at a later date.

Should anybody have a copy of Sylvester Crosby's *Early Coins of America* please list it as a subscriber's copy, 1875 edition with or without Maris Plate, or the 1878 edition with the Estes and Lauriat imprint.

If you have a copy of Waterman L Ormsby's *Bank Note Engraving* published in 1852 please mention if your copy is in its original binding which is leather with gilt. Seven copies are presently known to exist.

Please state if your Dr. Montroville W. Dickeson's *American Numismatical Manual* is the 1859, 1860 or 1865 edition.

I would appreciate knowing if you have John Hickcox's 1858 publication, *Historical Account of American Coinage*.

Please include your copy of Dr. Maris' 1881 publication *Coins of New Jersey*.

Your name is not necessary and the above data can be forwarded on a postcard to:

Robert Wester
54 High St.
Pembroke, N.H. 03275

To the Editor:

You should be swamped with congratulations on the stunning Vol. IV No. 3. I add mine eagerly.

Randolph Zander
Alexandria, Virginia

To the Editor:

In reply to your "...Articles of War", I hereby write the following:

What I have seen in *The Asylum* so far has been very good, and has been appreciated.

Coin World was kind enough to print a letter of mine in the Oct 22nd edition. I hope that the reference to the Numismatic Bibliomania Society will stir up some interest, enquiries and new members.

Charles Davis wrote two paragraphs on page 58 of his September, 1986 catalogue about the ANA Convention. I think this humorous item would be worth repeating in *The Asylum*.

Are any of our 300 readers aware of or interested in computer systems?

The University of Denver cooperated with *AB Bookman's Weekly* in the 8th annual Workshop-Seminar on the "Out-of-Print & Antiquarian Book Market for Booksellers & Librarians". This took place August 10-15, 1986.

The two items of special interest to me for possible application to numismatic literature are:

- 1) Computer Systems for the antiquarian book business.
- 2) Information Systems for bibliographic descriptions.

Carl G. Robertson
Inglewood, California

We noted Carl's letter to Coin World, and urge everyone in the membership to promote our hobby in this simple, yet effective way. We also enjoyed Charles Davis' piece; how about it, Charles, can we reprint it?
— Ed.

Professionals, Pet Rocks, Pet Food, and Pet Peeves

(continued from last issue)

Carling Gresham
Pomona Park, Florida

Questions: What *is* a 'professional numismatist?' Why don't doctors, booksellers, stockbrokers, professors, or lawyers call themselves 'professional . . .?'

What, exactly, is any *one* feature about a coin dealer that separates him from his brethern, and indicates to the WORLD that he is a 'professional' in some definable sense of the word?

Most of the professions named in the second question require, in some instances, *long* years of formal training. There might be as many as ten "professional numismatists" by now, but I know of only *one* person who has been trained formally in numismatics, i.e., in college.

Now, in my opinion, that person has every right to call himself a professional numismatist, but he's the *only* one, unless others have graduated after him.

I know one 'professional numismatist' who, about four months before the Hunt boys pushed silver past 40 bucks an ounce, was selling *goldfish!* (Along with other exotic/tropical fishes.) He jumped out of the fishbowl and into gold/silver coins, jewelry, bullion, etc. NOW he are a 'professional numismatist!' Geeeee Whiz! (The transition from goldfish to gold coins was a 'natural,' naturally.)

'Course, I've been told that his repeat business isn't too good; that he's had to sell his fancy cars and some property that he bought while he was getting his formal training on many innocents. I've looked at some of his 'BU' coins, and have had to leave his table for fear he'd stick his BIG fist in my big mouth. (He's a bit touchy about his 'highgrade' material; don't know why . . .)

I'm not saying that ALL self-styled 'professionals' are like the one just mentioned. But, and here's the punchline, *every time* I see a dealer who uses the term, momentarily I compare him with that character and his goldfish! 'Tain't fair, I know, but I can't help it!

Doctors, lawyers, and, I guess, Indian Chiefs, don't need to *prove* that they're professionals; coin dealers who claim to be 'professional numismatists' are trying to prove to *themselves* that they deserve the title, and in passing, *hope* to gain a measure of respectability from word association.

Even as long as I've been in the hobby, 45 years, I don't dare call myself a 'professional numismatist,' for fear, I guess, that someone might ask how I *earned* the title. And, yes, I've worked in coin shops; conducted auctions; identified and graded a "jillion" coins; worked on hobby newspaper staffs; edited and published hobby magazines; amassed a comprehensive numismatic library; coauthored a book, etc., ad nauseum.

Such experience doesn't qualify anyone as a professional anything. State officials *might* consider me a 'professional bookdealer', but only because a sales tax license application must indicate an occupational title; that and ego account for all professional numismatists, with the one exception.

* * * * *

In a similar vein is the use of the honorary (?) title of 'Colonel,' as designated by (bought from) the state of Kentucky. What's wrong with 'corporal,' or 'General?' Anyone selling framed diplomas for those ranks?

Use of such a phony title mocks the memory of many fine men who've died in the service of this country, United, North, and South, and it degrades the living who *earned* the rank. Anyone else using such a title is a liar, as are those who traffic in the practice, which is thoroughly dishonorable. Along with your chicken, Kentucky, shove it!

* * * * *

Whoever conceived the idea of pet rocks receives a hearty congratulations from me. Hope he made loads of green! (And that he doesn't follow the 'buy' advice in Gangreen's newsletter: read, tout sheet.)

Same for the guy who had the nerve to package, and market (!) pet food for those same pet rocks! Wow! What imagination . . . hard to beat. (Both *must* be relatives of the goldfish 'professional numismatist!')

***THE VERMONT COINAGE* by Reverend Edmund F. Slafter**

Robert Wester
Pembroke, New Hampshire

An essay that has become increasingly popular in recent years to bibliophiles and numismatists is *The Vermont Coinage*, which was presented to us by Reverend Edmund Farwell Slafter, A.M. — D.D.

Reverend Slafter was born in Norwich, Vermont May 30, 1816 and was the seventh of ten children. Following his graduation from Dartmouth College in 1840 he served several churches in Massachusetts and devoted himself to the American Bible Society.

He published fifteen to twenty superb essays including "Voyages of the Northmen to America," a sermon "on the occasion of the death of General Zachary Taylor" and, of interest to numismatists, "Copper Coinage of the Earl of Stirling, 1632". His last paper, a thorough study of the English "Book of Sports," issued by James I in 1618, was read before the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Dartmouth College awarded him an A.M. degree in 1865 and his Doctor of Divinity in 1890.

Reverend Slafter was married to Mary Hazen in August of 1849 and followed her in death at the age of 90 in Hampton, New Hampshire.

Reverend Slafter dignified many of the monthly meetings of the Boston Numismatic Society by his presence during the 1860's and 70's. He was a

(continued on page 8)



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(continued from page 5)

corresponding member of the Vermont Historical Society and his study and essay of Vermont coinage appeared from pages 291 to 318 in Volume I published by this Society in 1870.

Rev. Slafter's treatise speaks of legislative action which enacts the coinage, much historical background, including two fine plates of woodcuts — the numerous varieties to be found in the coinage of Vermont.

While Reverend Slafter is critical of comments by John H. Hickcox in "An Historical Account of American Coinage," published in 1858, he praises and expresses his indebtedness to the Boston watchmaker, S. S. Crosby, for Crosby's contribution of a portion of the woodcuts appearing in the plates for his work on Vermont coinage.

Over the years it has been generally accepted that 50 copies of this volume were printed. For example, on July 11 and 12 of 1894 the Chapman brothers sold "The Isaac Wood Collection" of American medals which included a number of numismatic books. Lot #1115, Slafter, E. F., "Vermont Coinage" 2 plates. 50 copies printed, very rare.

I was intrigued by this claim of only 50 copies printed due to the fact that I located 2 copies in Concord, New Hampshire. The copies reside at the New Hampshire Historical Society and our State Library Collections. It appeared to me at this point the Chapman's estimate was incorrect and I believe students have referred to and have taken this number for granted.

On February 25th 1986 I received a letter from Philip F. Elwert, the Deputy Director and Curator of the Vermont Historical Society. Mr. Elwert states: "Thank you for your note regarding Volume I of the collections of the V. H. Society. I'm sorry I can't give you an exact figure for the number of that volume printed. A good estimate would be 1,500 to 2,000 copies. I believe the only way to obtain a copy is through a rare book dealer."

I'm sure Volume I can be found in most Vermont libraries and institutions throughout that state and nationally in many cases. People in New England are reluctant to part with this volume as it contains many important essays. You'll find, "The Battle of Bennington" and a history and index to Ira Allan's, "History of Vermont."

The Vermont Coinage by Reverend Slafter was reprinted in 1981 by Sanford Durst and it was included with Hillyer Ryder's, "The Colonial Coins of Vermont."

When purchasing an original copy of this work you may expect to pay from 200 to 274 dollars today.

It was my good fortune to purchase an original but damaged copy that had this important coinage essay intact and perfect in every respect. I've since had my copy bound in Vermont green with gold lettering. My copy also includes the proceedings, by-laws of the Vermont Historical Society, along with an index of the essays contained within. I also bound in a number of blank pages which record my notes, correspondence and pleasant memories of a now completed project.

ON THE RECORD

Sidney K. Eastwood's *Numisma*

Randolph Zander
Alexandria, Virginia

Remy Bourne's "Overview of Obscure Numismatic Periodicals" in the Autumn 1986 *ASYLUM* makes an admirable point: size of circulation is not always a function of quality, and some ephemeral publications contain much of lasting value. One example he mentions is Sidney K. Eastwood's *Numisma*, of which seven issues, with a total of 130 pages, appeared between May 1939 and October 1948.

Sidney Eastwood was one of a galaxy of accomplished collectors and researchers who brought the Pittsburgh of his day to the top tange among America's numismatic centers. William W. Woodside was another; it was he who activated, inspired and led the band of dedicated men who assembled and nurtured the Carnegie Institute's once-great collection of coins, tokens and related objects.

Both men knew a great deal about a great many numismatic fields. Yet it is fair to say that each took greatest pleasure in the repertory of oddities and obscure issues falling generally under the Commonwealth series. Sidney Eastwood used to get his fingers grimy playing with a hobbyist's printing press in his cellar. The notion occurred to him to publish "an occasional numismatic pamphlet"; in doing so he could indulge both his numismatic and his printer's zeal. Bill Woodside was a ready and enthusiastic collaborator.

Between them they put out 22 articles on matters as varied as Conder Tokens, Ceylonese coffee chits, tokens of Central and Southern Africa, Onchan Internment Camp tokens, satirical medals of Napoleon III, and Lackington tokens. At the time they wrote, most of their subjects were beyond the ready reach of all but a few American readers. We are better and more widely informed a long generation later; but still much of what Eastwood and Woodside had to tell is not all that generally known.

In 1948, at the close of No. 7, Eastwood wrote his despedida: "Nearly 10 years have elapsed since the first of these pamphlets was printed and circulated. At that time there was no intention of issuing more . . . but kind letters from collectors here and abroad caused more . . . to be published. The future is uncertain, retirement age approaches, there may be more issues, this may be the last. The publisher is grateful for the friends who have expressed appreciation . . . those folks who also do things for the fun of doing them."

A BOOK COLLECTOR'S STRATEGY

From the *Philadelphia News*, September 17, 1887.

with thanks to
Forrest W. Daniel
Bismarck, North Dakota

A former old bachelor, of Spruce Street, who is a great lover of books, employed an old woman to take care of his rooms. The work of arranging and dusting the library led Martha to be smitten with a taste for reading. She began to spend all her earnings in buying books. Not long ago she entered the library with a parcel of books picked up at

a book stall. Her employer, seizing one of the books exclaimed: "How much did you give for this?"

"Thirty cents," replied Martha.

"Thirty cents! Why, this book is worth \$3,000. I will give you \$5 for it."

"You have just told me, sir, it is worth \$3,000. I will not sell it for less."

The book was the first edition, extremely rare, of Montaigne. The servant would not take less than \$3,000. This was more than the bookworm would agree to give for it. He thought the matter over for a month. Finally said he to himself: "This woman takes good care of me. She seems to have the same passion for old books that I have. Why should I not marry her? I should then have my Montaigne." He popped the question, was accepted and the old servant brought him the book by way of dowry. — *Centralia* (Wis.) *Enterprise*.



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THE LAST WORD

"God Bless Us, Every One!"

Perhaps your editor is mellowing with age, or perhaps it is the spirit of the season, but the pointed remarks one normally finds in this space will be replaced in this number by some well-

deserved compliments. Our authors merit high praise for their submissions. Our advertisers have loyally supported us. N.B.S. officers and board members have tendered unlimited assistance.

Our members have kept our letters column lively. We have many blessings to count, among them that our membership and our advertising revenue is increasing. Finally, we think that you will agree that the interest in numismatic literature has never been keener, and the morale of collectors has never been healthier. Tiny Tim said it best: "God bless us, every one!"

Now, how about a Christmas present for your editor? Here is our list:

- 1) A dealer's reply to the points raised by Jules J. Bloch II in his letter in the Autumn number.
- 2) Replies to the five thought-provoking questions asked by Leo J. Guibault, Jr. in his letter in the Autumn number.
- 3) A review of Vol 1, No. 1 of *The New England Journal of Numismatics*.

Finally, a couple of reminders. If you lack a complete run of *The Asylum*, you are in luck. All back issues are available (although Vol. 1 is in photocopy) at \$2.50 for the first copy and \$2.25 for each additional copy. These prices are for the U.S. and Canada; the corresponding overseas numbers are \$3.50 and \$2.50.

Second, do not forget to renew your membership in the N.B.S. Everyone's membership has expired as of the arrival of this issue, and you will not receive any further issues of *The Asylum* until you renew. So please do!

To renew and/or order back issues, write to N.B.S. Treasurer Alan Meghrig: 24921 Buckskin Drive, Laguna Hills, CA 92653. And now, adieu — and best wishes for a mania-filled New Year!



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Some features intended for this issue could not be included for lack of space, but will appear in future numbers.

— Ed.



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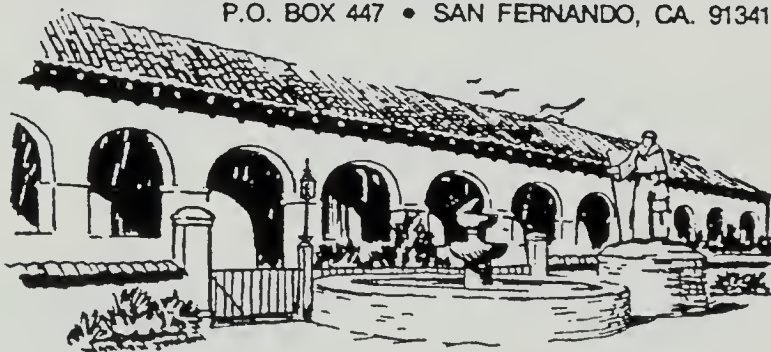
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